

Workforce Management and Development in the California Courts

Introduction



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION



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Workforce Management and Development Introduction

This guide provides an introduction to the topic of workforce management and development (WM&D) and discusses why it is of critical importance to court operations. Included is a model process for initiating a WM&D effort in any court.

Workforce management and development is the active management of all aspects of the “talent life cycle” of employees. It includes:

- Workforce planning
- Recruiting, hiring, and retention
- Performance management
- Succession planning
- Knowledge management
- Employee development
- Reward and recognition systems
- Retirement contingency planning

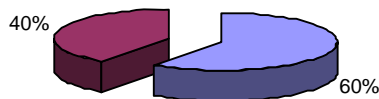
All of these areas should work together as a complementary system. Over time, the goal is to embed these processes in the everyday work of the courts in order to ensure a workforce of the right size, skills, and performance level to meet organizational needs.

California Court Issues

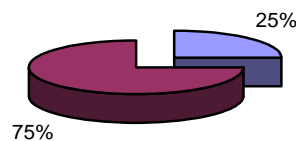
The WM&D issues facing the California judicial branch, and virtually every court in it, are extremely serious. A recent survey conducted by an outside consulting firm yielded the following information.

- A retirement wave will hit the judicial branch between the years 2008 and 2015. The California judicial system can expect to lose up to 40 percent of its current managerial and executive-level staff by the year 2008, and 75 percent of its current managerial and executive-level staff by the year 2015:

**Projected Executive & Managerial
Retirements by 2008 = 40%**



**Projected Executive & Managerial
Retirements by 2015 = 75%**



Survey results also indicated that:

- More than many organizations, the court system relies on institutional knowledge and relationships to get work done. The loss of staff to retirement could cripple court operations.
- Individual courts may find that the talent loss occurs in multiple positions in addition to managerial and executive staff.
- The loss will be exaggerated because most employees in a given position fall into a certain age range. The loss will occur simultaneously throughout the courts and the branch.

The following issues add to the complexity of addressing the loss of key talent and knowledge in the courts:

- A similar retirement wave is occurring in private industry with the mass exodus of the baby boomers. This exodus has greatly increased competition between the public and private sectors for educated and experienced employees, managers, and executives. This problem is compounded in the California courts as university graduate programs in judicial administration are replaced by university public administration curricula.
- The role of the court manager has changed substantially. Now a successful court executive must be a jack-of-all-trades in legal, human resources, and fiscal matters as well as in facilities management and contract negotiation.
- Because of (1) the complexity and scope of many executive/managerial jobs, (2) the reliance on institutional knowledge (versus documented processes and procedures), and (3) the importance of strong court relationships for accomplishing work objectives, key court executives estimated that it would take a minimum of 18 to 24 months to adequately prepare their successors.

Immediate and Long-Term Needs of the Courts

The immediate need is clear. The immediate need in the courts is to prepare for the exodus of key leaders and others in at-risk, critical positions. Critical positions are defined as those that—because of either the incumbents' unique knowledge and skills or the sheer volume of people eligible to retire in any given position—would severely affect court operations if they were vacated.

Preparation includes assessing an individual court's risk, developing strategies for finding replacements or successors, documenting and/or transferring key knowledge before it literally leaves the organization, and otherwise developing WM&D systems to address critical gaps.

All of this effort is needed if the goal of providing efficient and effective court operations is to be met now and in the near future.

The long-term need. The longer-term opportunity for the courts is to strategically manage their biggest resource—their human resource. This management goes beyond the immediate crisis created by the retirement wave. It involves an in-depth and systemic look at creating strong systems for human resources, strategic planning, and workforce management and development that complement and support one another.

Benefits of Workforce Management and Development

Institutionalizing workforce management and development in the courts has the potential to accomplish the following in any court and in the branch as a whole:

Leadership Continuity and Improved Knowledge Sharing

- Transfer of knowledge, skills, and relationships from retiring workers to their successors
- A pool of qualified workers available to assume roles vacated by retiring workers
- Available data to enable effective planning for departures and to minimize the risk of losing critical knowledge about the court and branch

Improved Workforce Capabilities and Performance, Despite Retirement Risk

- More highly skilled and more knowledgeable employees as a result of employee development
- Increased employee commitment levels, resulting in less employee turnover
- Slowed departure of retirement eligible-workers
- Better monitoring and planning in terms of employee performance, proficiency levels, and skill gaps across the entire workforce
- Better support for employees throughout the employment experience

Project Overview

In 2003 a broad spectrum of superior court and AOC sponsors and stakeholders initiated a workforce management and development project. They developed processes, procedures, and tools for courts interested in supplanting their workforce management and development systems.

This project overview provides a more in-depth look at WM&D systems and their definitions, and presents a process for addressing short- and long-term WM&D needs in any court.

Diagram 1 displays the components of an effective WM&D system. All of the components working together help maximize the potential of employees during their talent life cycles.

Diagram 1. Workforce management and Development Model



NOTE: Alignment with strategic planning, the involvement of unions, and sufficient support of related HR and IS systems all help ensure success.

Definitions

Workforce management and development encompasses:

- **Workforce planning**—Understanding the size, demographics, and capabilities of the workforce and planning how to develop, deploy, and retain that workforce to best meet organizational goals, now and in the future
- **Recruiting, hiring, and retention**—Acquiring new talent and retaining current talent to fit workforce plans and organizational needs
- **Performance management**—Setting specific and measurable goals for employees and using feedback, coaching, and recognition to improve performance and skills
- **Succession planning**—Anticipating and planning for future organizational needs by identifying critical positions and high-potential employees, and taking steps to develop these employees for future key positions
- **Knowledge management**—Organizing, documenting, storing, and transferring critical organizational knowledge

- **Employee development**—Developing employee capabilities through training, on-the-job experience, and higher education based on well-defined job requirements, individual goals, and current and future organizational needs
- **Reward and recognition systems**—Offering a supportive and motivating work environment by recognizing and rewarding employee contributions and achievements
- **Retirement contingency or “gap” planning**—Preparing for the retirement of people in positions critical to court operations to ensure that essential skills and knowledge remain in the organization

The goal is to use all of these processes together over time to ensure a workforce of the right size, skills, and performance to meet organizational needs. Relying too heavily on one or two of the processes and neglecting others reduces the effectiveness of the process for employees and the organization.

Applying Workforce Management and Development

Workforce management and development is a highly interrelated set of processes. Volumes have been written about each component of WM&D (topics such as employee development, succession planning, and knowledge management). When the components are taken together, the scope and complexity of assessing, improving, and simply understanding WM&D can be overwhelming.

It is important to have a framework for assessing and addressing short- and long-term WM&D needs. While the overall framework should remain fairly consistent among courts as they work to understand and close WM&D gaps, it is likely that individual courts will differ in priorities and action plans. This flexibility is necessary, and it reflects the understanding that each trial court has a unique culture with unique business needs, necessitating the adaptation of strategies, processes, and tools.

To illustrate how an effective WM&D effort in a court might be structured, two process models are presented below. The first model delineates the key functional areas, or work streams, of an integrated WM&D effort. The second model is a chronological process for assessing and addressing WM&D needs.

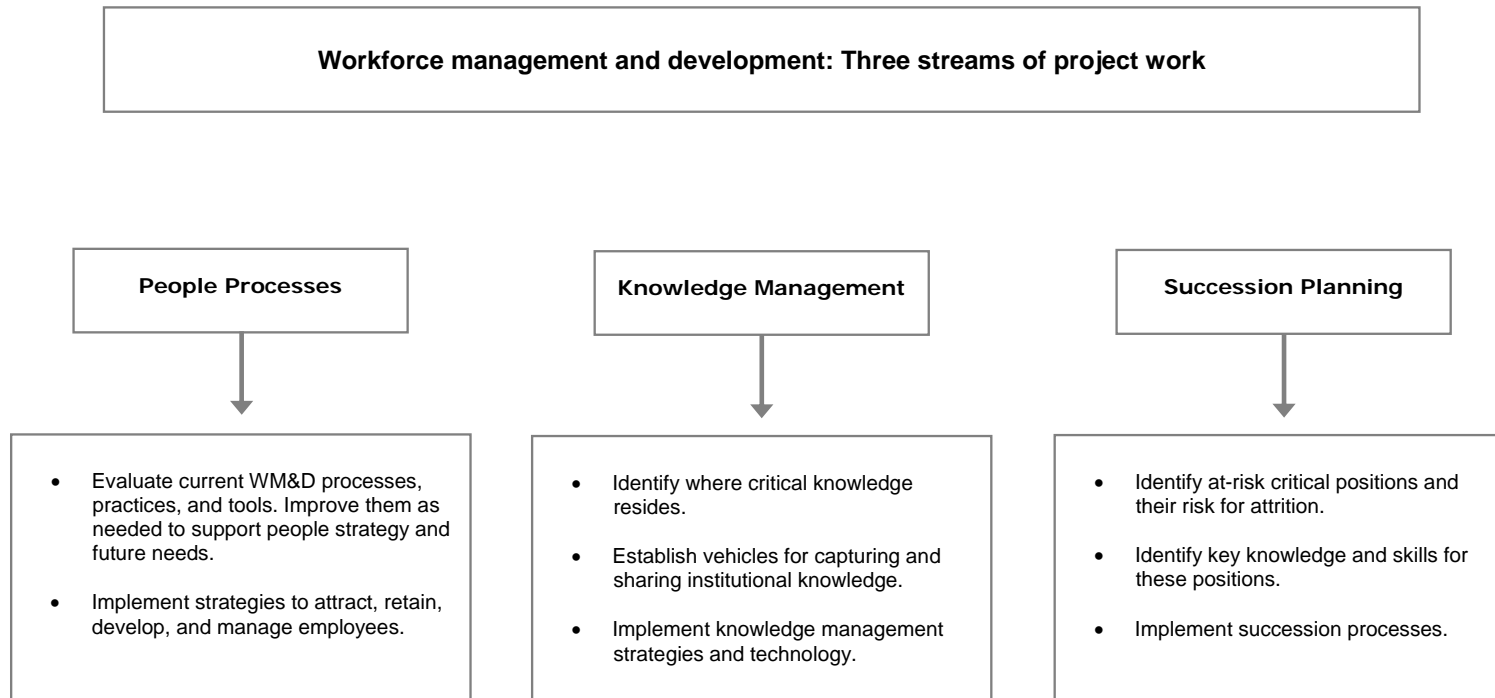
Process Model One: Project Structure

One way to understand a WM&D effort as applied to court operations is to break it down into large categories of work. **Diagram 2** shows a WM&D effort broken down into three main categories: people processes, knowledge management, and succession planning.

These categories were chosen purposely to elevate the role of knowledge management and succession planning in addressing the retirement-wave exodus. The people processes are critical in that they are

needed to support retention and development of critical knowledge and skills within a court, and should be improved on over time so that a strong WM&D system is put in place.

In the diagram, several high-level action steps are identified under each main category. These action steps—such as “Identify where critical knowledge resides” and “Identify critical positions and their risk for attrition”—are essential for understanding and addressing WM&D issues in any court.

Diagram 2. WM&D Project Structure

Process Model Two: Chronology of Work (Work Process Map)

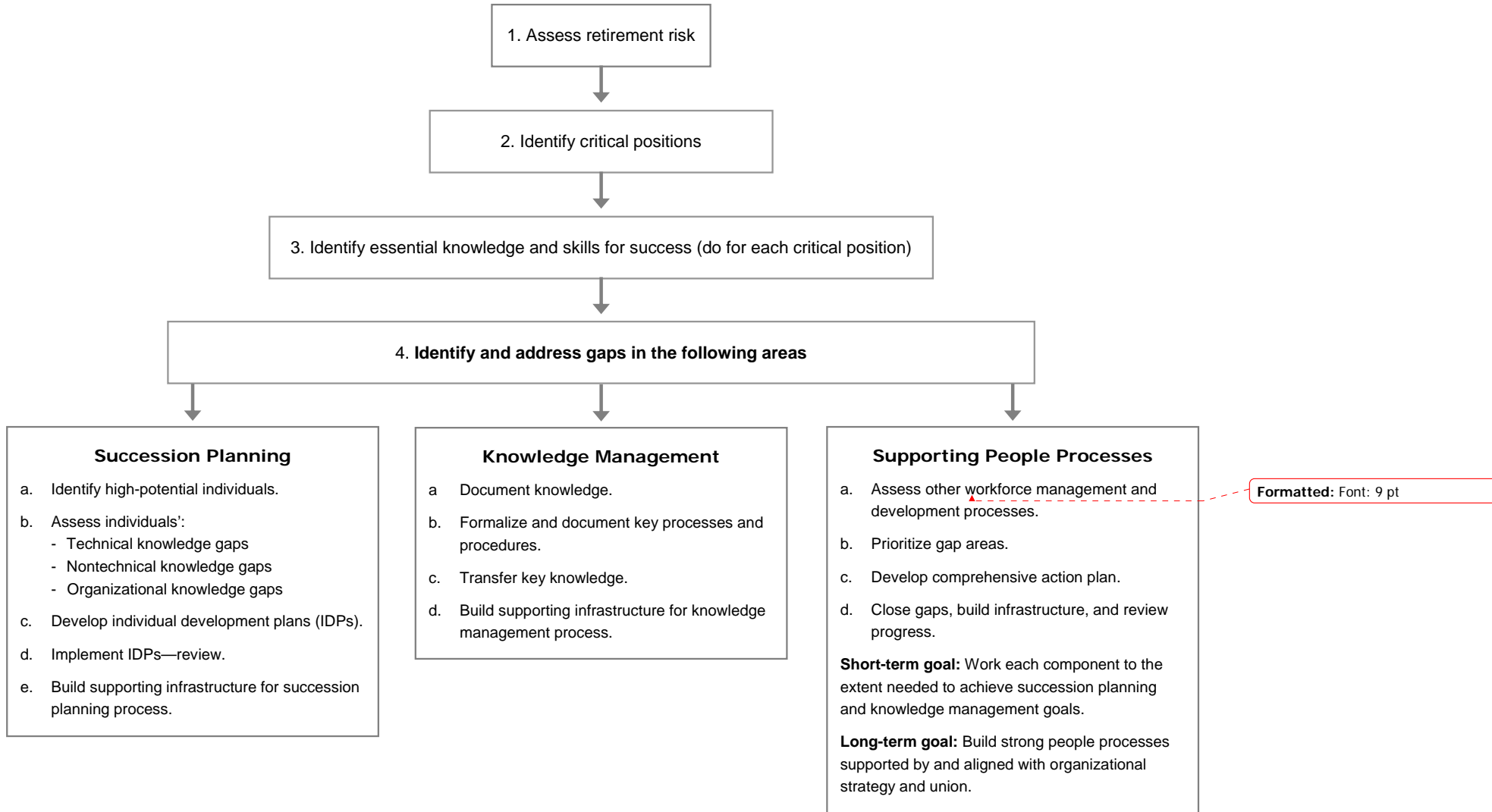
Another helpful way to understand a WM&D effort in a court system is shown in **Diagram 3**, a chronological work process map. Steps are shown in the order in which they would occur in a court. Further explanation of each step follows.

Step 1: Assess retirement (eligibility) risk. This step involves gathering and assessing demographic information to determine the level of retirement eligibility risk associated with a particular position. This information serves as a foundation for projecting future workforce gaps and retirement impact.

Step 2: Identify critical positions. In this step, retirement eligibility is correlated with specific court positions to determine whether any of the positions held by personnel likely to leave in the near future will pose a serious threat to the court's ability to conduct its work. (As mentioned earlier, critical positions are defined as those that—due to either the criticalness of the incumbents' unique knowledge and skills or the sheer volume of people eligible to retire in any given position—would severely affect court operations if they were vacated.)

Step 3: Identify essential knowledge and skills for success. This step recognizes that particular knowledge and skills are needed for an individual to successfully carry out the duties of any given position. In order to prepare successors, select replacements, and capture and transfer knowledge, it is necessary to identify the essential knowledge and skills required for each identified critical position.

Step 4: Identify and address gaps in succession planning; knowledge management; and other, supporting people processes (workforce planning, recruiting/hiring and retention, performance management, employee development, reward and recognition systems, and retirement contingency or gap planning). Once the court's needs are identified, the infrastructure must be refined or built to develop and maintain the new processes.

Diagram 3. Work Process Map

Summary and Next Steps

In summary, workforce management and development comprises very important and highly complex interrelated processes. The components of WM&D need to be aligned with one another as well as with court strategic plans and any represented unions. If this is achieved, courts will be successful in preparing and maintaining a knowledgeable, skilled workforce that not only can carry out court operations but excels at operating a court in a changing environment.

For additional, detailed information on how to begin to assess and address WM&D needs in your court, read the following guides, which are available from the AOC Education Division/Center for Judicial Education and Research:

1. *Implementation Guide*
2. *Succession Planning and Management Guide*
3. *Knowledge Management Handbook*

These guides will be made available online for court users.

Implementation Guide

The *Implementation Guide* is the starting point for determining workforce management and development needs in any court. This guide walks a court through two initial assessments to determine *where* and *to what extent* it has workforce management and development issues. It contains detailed instructions for conducting a workforce analysis of risk to determine a court's level of vulnerability from impending retirements or other personnel loss, and thus lays the foundation for knowledge management and succession planning. Additionally, it helps a court assess the strength of each WM&D system and prioritize areas that need work, such as those listed on page 2. All these parts of the system are interdependent and need to work in a coordinated, mutually supportive fashion if a court is to have a knowledgeable, skilled workforce in place now and in the future.

Knowledge Management Handbook

Once a court has identified key at-risk positions using the assessments found in the *Implementation Guide*, the *Knowledge Management Handbook* provides tools and processes for identifying, capturing, and sharing key institutional knowledge. This guide is very helpful in preparing for succession planning because it explains how to identify essential knowledge that is needed in critical at-risk positions.

Succession Planning and Management Guide

Once a court has identified key positions for succession planning via the assessments found in the *Implementation Guide*, the *Succession Planning and Management Guide* provides tools and processes for identifying and developing potential leaders.